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Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

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Wednesday, 26 May 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Hariri	(Lebanon)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Burt
	United States of America	Ms. Anderson

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Intercultural dialogue for peace and security

Letter dated 19 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/248)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-37690 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Intercultural dialogue for peace and security

Letter dated 19 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/248)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now being its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2010/248, which contains a letter dated 19 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper for the item under consideration.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

On behalf of the Council, I also extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Alistair Burt, Member of Parliament, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom.

I shall now make statement in my capacity as Prime Minister of Lebanon to begin today's discussion.

There is an intimate relationship between committing oneself to the Charter of the United Nations and opting for dialogue as a way to achieve world peace and security. Undoubtedly, there is a need to consider that relationship in all its aspects, and this has led United Nations bodies and agencies to initiate programmes and formulate guidelines. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 53/22, which proclaimed 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations, a great number of events have taken place. Successive — and not redundant — efforts have been undertaken to increase the opportunities for dialogue, benefit from their assets and strengthen their impact. Lebanon has taken part in these efforts. Its contribution has been inspired by its specific historical experience and its societal and political model, which is often described as unique.

The position of Lebanon on the aims, value and methodology of dialogue, as well as on the conditions that make it credible and effective, have been clearly stated on many occasions, notably during the General Assembly's 2007 High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace and in the address of the His Excellency the President of the Lebanese Republic in 2008 in support of the dialogue initiative of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Through such occasions and endeavours, Lebanon bears witness to the strong ties that bind our country to the United Nations, which has consistently demonstrated its attention and commitment to Lebanon's freedom, sovereignty and stability. Also, they show our respect for international resolutions and reflect Lebanon's endeavours to promote the significance and promise of positive encounters between religions and cultures.

Members are well aware of the difficulties that have tested our country and people, but that have not shaken our will to live together in one homeland, enriched by its diversity and openness and proud of its partnership between Christians and Muslims in designing a common national future and destiny.

The need for dialogue between people of different faiths and cultures is all the greater today in view of the problems faced in relations between peoples and communities, and the dangers of confrontation that may be brought about by policies based on threats, intimidation and fear. Dialogue stems from recognition of identities and specificities and respect for religious and cultural diversity; at the same time, these values must not be expressed in hostility towards others, which can lead to the drawing of bloody religious and cultural borders.

For that reason, we believe that dialogue must encompass an awareness of traditional, renewed and new phenomena of sectarian and ethnic violence, terrorism and intimidation. And the best way to address and pre-empt these phenomena is to deal with their root causes through preventive diplomacy. This requires a coalition against fanaticism and extremism, and it demands that conflicts be settled peacefully and justly. Moreover, as a complement, patient efforts to engage in dialogue should be made in the areas of policy, culture and media in order to heighten

immunity to violence, extremism and terrorism. Dialogue may not extinguish the fire, but if carried out seriously and resolutely, it will largely diminish the probability of its igniting.

Efforts to launch dialogue in a long-term perspective may open doors that would otherwise be closed by those who look at communities that have distinct cultural and religious identities as monolithic entities with essential and perennial features. Not every dissimilarity reflects a defect, and a community's essence is not embodied in its individual members, holding them accountable for deplorable acts perpetrated by those who share their religion, faith or culture.

This means that dialogue cannot be effective unless it strives to prevent the spillover of violence, be it real or symbolic, from one place to another under the impact of this perception. For that is often the case where remote conflicts intrude on neighbourly relations and local social and political tensions and disputes assume global dimensions, be they cultural or religious. Many countries, including my own, have witnessed such intrusions. That is why we need to caution against seeing our local problems as mere reflections of regional and international confrontations that turn our country into a battleground rather than a homeland for its people that deals with its own internal problems and protects its own unity and diversity.

A dialogue of life focused on culture, society and politics — or coexistence, as we like to call it at home — is the path to preserving unity and being enriched by plurality. These goals are at the heart of our insistence on parity between Muslims and Christians, stipulated in the Taif Accords. This parity strengthens Lebanon's ability to contribute to global intercultural and interreligious dialogue and its self-understanding as a locus of encounter and exchange, rather than an arena of conflict.

We learn from the dialogue of life, which goes hand in hand with the dialogue of ideas, that the search for agreement does not necessarily lead to agreement. However, its importance — indeed, its urgency — resides in acknowledging disagreement and differences for what they are, without artificially understating or exaggerating their significance and implications.

Dialogue does not ignore contradiction or deny democratic competition; it is, rather, a mode of managing plurality so that differences do not generate hostility or cause divisions. Dialogue is not a process of negotiations conditioned by power relations, but a contribution to changing these relations, even in relative terms, in order to ensure equal footing among dialogue partners. That is why the practice of dialogue at the global level converges with diplomatic action driven by international law and rejects the logic of might, imposition and double standards.

Be that as it may, such an affirmation does not dissipate the ambiguities that colour its reality. The advocacy of dialogue among nations and the promotion of a culture of peace raise doubts among many people about their credibility and utility, as well as fears that they may function as a pretext or cover for an ulterior political motive alien to its raison d'être. Dialogue is not true to its meaning if unavowed objectives hide behind its stated aims. It does not bear fruit unless its partners agree to build equitable relations. Maintaining hegemony, oppression and injustice without raising fundamental ethical questions renders dialogue itself questionable.

This is true in our country, which has been subject to 25 years of Israeli occupation and recurrent Israeli wars. Thousands of Lebanese citizens have been killed, our economy and stability have been severely affected by Israeli threats and massacres, and the occupation of parts of our land continues. It is legitimate to ask how dialogue can build confidence and new relationships in the context of the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands and the persistent denial of the national and human rights of the Palestinian people, and more particularly their rights to return and to an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. In other words, the spirit of justice and respect for international law and legitimacy must prevail if an authentic dialogue is to occur. This is all the more true since Jerusalem, the city of peace and meeting place of the believers of the monotheistic religions, cannot fulfil its historical vocation unless its people are freed from injustice, changes in its demography and character cease, and an end is put to its occupation.

I am sure that we are all aware that establishing a just and genuine peace in Palestine, as called for in the Arab Peace Initiative, would have a substantial impact on relations between cultures and religions. Moreover, a just peace is necessary if dialogue is to succeed as an approach to crisis-solving and achieving genuine

rapprochement between the Western world and the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Finally, in opening the debate on the topic of this meeting, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of my country, Lebanon, to the universal ethical values of the United Nations Charter that guide its diplomacy and programmes, particularly in mediation and conflict resolution. These values are the basis of intercultural dialogue, and intercultural dialogue in turn promotes them.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I again thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his participation in this meeting and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: Mr. Prime Minister, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations. As this is your first visit to the United Nations in your capacity as Prime Minister of Lebanon, I wish you great success and hope for peace and stability under your leadership. I also welcome Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, Mr. Alistair Burt, to the Security Council.

I thank you, Sir, for using Lebanon's presidency of the Security Council to have this discussion on intercultural dialogue. This is an important topic for Lebanon and for all Member States. It is especially relevant now on the eve of the third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, which will begin Friday in Rio de Janeiro and to which I will travel directly from this meeting. I once again salute the leadership of the original sponsors of the Alliance, Turkey and Spain, and thank the Government of Brazil for hosting the meeting.

Support for the Alliance keeps growing. We just welcomed the one-hundredth member, the United States. I hope that the Alliance's membership and work will expand further still. It is the right initiative at the right time. Our world is changing rapidly, and it is changing in unpredictable ways. We are growing more connected through migration, trade and technology, yet in some ways we are also moving further apart. Not only are countries coming into more frequent contact with each other, but many are themselves becoming more multicultural and diverse.

To many, this enrichment is a matter of celebration; yet to others, it can be confusing and intimidating. Local challenges can easily spill over national and regional borders. In the same way, local solutions can be shared and inspire change elsewhere. This underscores the need to build space for cooperation and to strengthen mutual understanding and respect. This should not be done as a feel-good exercise, but because it is essential for achieving peace and security in the broadest sense.

Dialogue can defuse tensions and keep situations from escalating. It can promote reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict. It can introduce moderate voices into polarized debates. At a time when prejudice and hatred are all too common, extremists seek new recruits through incitement and identity-based appeals, and politicians use divisiveness as a strategy to win elections, dialogue can be an antidote. Dialogue is a force for conflict prevention, management and resolution. It can contribute to peacebuilding. It can move us towards peaceful coexistence — the fundamental human project.

But this work requires action on many levels. There is a need to protect cultural diversity. That is a basic human right, enshrined in many legally binding instruments. Just five days ago, to mark the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, seven human rights rapporteurs released a joint statement calling on States to uphold their responsibility under international law to create an environment conducive to the enjoyment of cultural rights, including the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples.

Education must also be a priority. It has been said that knowledge is power. We need to strengthen education systems so that young people can benefit from cultural diversity and not be victimized by those who exploit differences. Increased exposure to information and communications technology makes this more critical. We must also cast a wide net of engagement. Solutions will require the active partnership of local Governments, civil society, the media, young leaders and many others. This is our common responsibility.

The General Assembly proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. Many summits and commendable efforts have likewise sought to bridge the world's dividing lines. We all

recall the General Assembly's high-level meeting on the culture of peace two years ago, held at the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. We all agree on the importance of intercultural dialogue and shared values for peace and security.

The challenge now, for the Security Council in particular, is to follow up on today's discussion by incorporating intercultural dialogue more fully into its efforts to maintain international peace and security. Many members of the Council have ample experience in the problems that can ensue from cross-cultural tensions and perceptions of injustice, but they are also well versed in the benefits of dialogue and the great strength to be found in diversity. I urge the members of the Council to draw more on these experiences and share the lessons they have learned. Intercultural dialogue is an important tool in the diplomat's toolkit. I urge Council members to make greater use of it.

I thank Prime Minister Hariri once again for focusing our minds on strengthening this important work.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Burt (United Kingdom): I am delighted to be the first Minister of the new British Government to address the Security Council. It is a particular honour that you are in the chair, Sir, as I do so, particularly on a day when my Foreign Secretary has made a key announcement in the House of Commons in relation to non-proliferation, which is designed to assist all our efforts to promote understanding through greater transparency among nations. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on Lebanon's membership of the Council and pay tribute to your delegation's handling of Lebanon's presidency this month.

I would also like to join in welcoming the Secretary-General to the Council and to thank him for his kind and welcoming introductory remarks. The new British Government looks forward very much to working closely with him.

We welcome the importance you attach, Mr. President, to intercultural dialogue as an instrument to prevent, manage and resolve conflict and to build peace after conflict. We see all too often that prejudice and misunderstanding can cause and perpetuate conflict within and between societies.

In Afghanistan, it is clear that sustainable peace requires a truly representative, transparent Afghan political process that will give all Afghans a real stake in that process. Next month's peace jirga is an important opportunity to begin a process of dialogue aimed at achieving an enduring national consensus for a political settlement. We must all support this process as a fundamental part of ensuring that Afghanistan emerges after 30 years of conflict as a peaceful and functioning State.

In the Middle East, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian issue has been a source of anger and resentment for over 60 years. It is one of the biggest obstacles to intercultural dialogue and understanding, particularly among Muslims, Jews and Christians. We will work for peace in the Middle East with a secure and universally recognized Israel living alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian State.

The current process of proximity talks offers hope for a solution. We welcome and support the United States efforts. We call on the parties to continue working to narrow the gaps between them and to take the bold political decisions necessary to achieving a lasting peace. The region must play its role, too, by supporting dialogue and negotiation and taking steps to build a greater sense of trust.

We applaud the range of international efforts under way to promote intercultural dialogue. We support the work of the Alliance of Civilizations in promoting such dialogue as a means of preventing conflict. I wish the Alliance well as it begins its annual Forum in Brazil tomorrow. The Alliance is at its best when engaged in projects that draw on the energy of the media and civil society to promote dialogue and understanding.

I would like to highlight three points. First, while intercultural dialogue should acknowledge our differences, it must also be built on universal human values. The United Nations has led the way in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights treaties. These rights and freedoms are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Respect for those rights enriches and underpins our common humanity.

Secondly, dialogue must mean exactly that. Your moving opening address, Mr. President, made clear your views on this. It requires a willingness to be influenced as well as to influence. It must be based on the recognition that diplomacy, politics and life are not a zero-sum game. Reconciliation requires both an acceptance of different views and approaches and the recognition of shared values and common interests, and — as you yourself said — not avoiding the difficult things or ignoring contradictions. The United Nations, with its unique legitimacy and global reach, is well placed to support such dialogue.

Thirdly, we need an approach to intercultural dialogue that builds understanding of cross-cultures and helps us deal with diversity and difference in a tolerant and respectful way. This cannot be done only by politicians or by the diplomacy of the United Nations. It must begin with open societies whose citizens are able to engage positively with other cultures, both in their own country and around the world. The Secretary-General observed this in his opening remarks as well, when he said that improved technology and communications will ensure that those we represent are better informed than ever before and ever more keen to join with others in the dialogue we are discussing today. This openness in communication, and the involvement of those we represent, will both inspire and challenge us in our roles on their behalf.

Thank you again, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate. We must now ensure that its lessons are reflected in the Council's ongoing vital work in preventing and resolving conflict. May intercultural dialogue help all of us to live up to the highest ideals, as set out in the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of France, I thank Lebanon for having taken the initiative to bring us together under its presidency of the Security Council to discuss the contribution of intercultural dialogue to peace and security. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement. As French President Nicolas Sarkozy stressed on his most recent visit to Beirut, Lebanon is for us, the French, a glorious crossroads of civilizations and religions, a symbol of openness and diversity. Lebanon, a country that unites life and Government in dialogue and the continuing quest for concord for the benefit of all and of different communities, embodies what peace can owe to tolerance, respect for others and the acceptance of differences.

Since 11 September 2001, dialogue among cultures and civilizations has been on the international agenda, for better or for worse. No one can deny the benefits of dialogue between individuals and groups in a globalized world where cultural identity has assumed increasing importance. Intercultural dialogue can be a tool for preventing conflicts, resolving crises and building peace, but it cannot be an end in itself. Cultures are not homogeneous, autonomous or frozen entities that we can bring together around a table. Every individual can legitimately claim several cultural identities, or choose not to have one at all. Intercultural dialogue, then, should not lead to the political instrumentalization of cultures, which belong to no one, are neither fixed nor exclusive, and are bridges rather than fortresses or weapons.

Tolerance and mutual respect are at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations, and we can therefore only welcome the fact that initiatives on intercultural dialogue are developing under its auspices. Since its creation, UNESCO has worked for rapprochement and understanding among peoples, to promote peace and cultural diversity. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions are essential instruments. UNESCO is therefore by its nature the right place for such matters.

For our part, States members of the Security Council have the responsibility to act to prevent or put an end to conflicts. This requires us to take into account the many factors that can raise tensions between communities, one of which is culture. But the cultural factor is rarely the direct or single cause of conflict; in reality, more often than not it is exploited by radicals of all stripes.

It is in this context that France supports dialogue among cultures, because cultural diversity is at the heart of the French national identity: Atlantic and Mediterranean France; maritime and continental France; Mediterranean and African France. France is made up of a multitude of traditions, customs and beliefs. Our secularism seeks, within the French national community, to organize the peaceful coexistence of all beliefs and non-beliefs, which must remain in the private sphere in order to make public

life a place where all can gather around the values of the Republic. We are neither Catholics nor atheists; neither Jews nor Muslims; we are French citizens, sons and daughters of the nation.

Furthermore, diversity, a fact of life today in our towns and cities, is at the heart of the European project. We must recognize that diversity. Old countries with Christian traditions must now allow their Muslim citizens to practice and live their religions, just as Muslim countries must do for Christians and Jews. The successful establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean, which France co-chairs with Egypt, illustrates this determination to build a concrete, common future in a world of broad human, religious and cultural diversity. Our activity in the area of Francophonie, committed to promoting human rights, democracy and peacebuilding, also demonstrates our resolve to pursue our common political objectives through dialogue in respect for cultural diversity. Finally, France is a member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, whose projects we welcome as instruments of preventive diplomacy. In that regard, we look forward to the forthcoming ministerial Forum of the Alliance on 28 and 29 May.

Respect for the values and universal principles of human rights is the indispensable foundation on which intercultural dialogue should be built and reinforced. That dialogue cannot exist outside civil society; it must encourage the participation of women; it must include representatives of every religion and every spiritual, philosophical and humanistic tradition in all their diversity and multiplicity; it must not permit any discrimination, be it on the basis of religion, public opinion, sexual orientation, gender or nationality. In order to have dialogue, one must be able to listen to contrary and critical opinions. The exercise of freedom of expression is a sine qua non for intercultural dialogue.

This freedom of expression is indivisible; it is either there or it is not. To limit it in any way, shape or form would be to deny its very existence. It is in the context of its unshakeable and resolute attachment to liberty that France will continue to be devoted to the dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome you, Sir, to the presidency of the Security Council, and we thank the Lebanese delegation for its initiative to convene today's meeting on the important and topical theme of intercultural dialogue. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his statement, which enriched our discussion.

A sweeping analysis of the path of world history leads us to the conviction that approaches to current international problems, including peace and security, must be linked to the cultural diversity of global civilizations. In this regard, the Russian Federation welcomes the creation of relevant and various platforms for dialogue within and on the margins of the United Nations. Two important initiatives, we believe, are the Alliance of Civilizations, sponsored by Spain and Turkey, and the trilateral forum on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development sponsored by the Philippines. We believe that the potential of these and similar initiatives is their complementary nature, which should rule out any element of competition.

As was emphasized by the Secretary-General, today's meeting is also very timely in the light of tomorrow's opening in Rio de Janeiro of the third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations and the declaration of 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

The Russian Federation is a country that brings together many ethnicities, cultures, religions and social groups, and we therefore strongly believe that encouraging tolerance among cultures and their mutual enrichment is of tremendous significance in today's world, which faces the exacerbation of inter-ethnic, political, economic and social clashes in which existing differences are used to justify terrorism and extremism.

Factors promoting the growth of extremism are, of course, uninformed or distorted views of religion, history and the cultures of other peoples, as well as the skilful manipulation of these concepts. That, in turn, leads to mistrust, alienation, often hostility and sometimes even confrontation. For our part, we hold to be false and erroneous the notion of a conflict of civilizations and cultures, which is based on false cultural and civilizational views and stereotypes. The Russian Federation therefore categorically rejects any attempt to associate any specific religion or culture with such global threats as terrorism or transnational organized crime.

Achieving sustainable peace and security undoubtedly requires mutual familiarity and

understanding, tolerance and respect for the diversity of national cultures, traditions and religious customs. That, in turn, is the basis for effective joint efforts of the members of the international community to confront today's global challenges, including in the area of security, to which the Council pays a great deal of attention.

One of the time-tested ways for the international community to react diplomatically to conflict situations is mediation. The work of mediators requires not least deep knowledge of historical, cultural and other specificities of conflicts. Of course, the work of mediators must be duly transparent and, if under a Council mandate, accountable to the Council.

The United Nations does not possess a monopoly on mediation, so the use of regional agencies, arrangements and agreements is an important mechanism called for in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter. Chapter VIII of the Charter focuses Member States on the priority resolution of so-called local disputes with the help of such agencies, arrangements and agreements before referring them to the Council.

The United Nations must leverage the experience and expertise of regional organizations in its work and approach questions of mediation on the basis of the principle of reasonable division of labour with these regional and subregional bodies. Due to objective factors, it is the regional players that are the most receptive to the cultural and historical dimensions of conflict, and that of course promotes the success of a mediation mission.

In addition to the acknowledged partners in this area — in particular the African Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and organizations on other continents — we believe that there are good prospects for United Nations cooperation with organizations that are actively gaining experience, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The universal nature of the United Nations dictates the need for each Member State to consider the religious traditions and diversity of world cultures and religions. The cultural wealth of humankind in and of itself possesses significant peacekeeping potential that is capable of preventing the so-called clash of civilizations and of making a significant contribution to conflict resolution. We believe that the United Nations is, in fact, the unique platform for building bridges and overcoming prejudices and misunderstandings that inherently threaten to peace and security. How effectively we use this capacity will, to a significant degree, determine our success in implementing the major purposes of the Organization — ensuring global security, development and respect for human rights.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to welcome Prime Minister Hariri as he presides over today's Council meeting and to thank him for his very insightful statement. Japan congratulates Lebanon on having organized this discussion on an important topic.

Intercultural dialogue is an essential tool for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As the Secretary-General asserted in his opening statement, the United Nations Charter calls for international cooperation in solving global problems and promoting fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. It underscores the relevance of intercultural dialogue to the work of the United Nations.

First of all, the importance of intercultural dialogue for conflict prevention cannot be overemphasized. Lack of respect and tolerance for each other's ways of life, religions and cultures has been a common cause of conflict. Mistrust and prejudice between peoples and their differences have all too often led to tension and even war. Diversity within societies and between countries in fact deepens the richness of humankind so long as the culture of peace and intercultural dialogue are promoted.

The Security Council should place greater emphasis on the peaceful settlement of disputes before violence erupts. The Security Council should encourage more dialogue between parties by making the best use of all tools available in an effective and timely manner before a situation further deteriorates.

The United Nations Charter envisages the role of the Secretary-General to include giving early warning to the Security Council. The Secretary-General may play an active role in the promotion of intercultural dialogue. The recent Security Council retreat concluded that the Security Council and the Secretary-General should jointly maximize the use of available means to promote dialogue and prevent conflicts. In particular, the Council should consider how the United Nations can increase the number of mediators and

political representatives of high calibre. Once conflict abates, intercultural dialogue has to be placed at the heart of efforts to resolve conflicts and reach peace agreements. Freedom to exercise religious belief and respect for cultural heritage must be embedded in the framework of every peace agreement in order to end conflicts and prevent their recurrence. Above all, people of different religions and cultures must learn to coexist peacefully. Confidence-building and reconciliation measures should follow.

Intercultural dialogue is also an important element of a successful post-conflict peacebuilding strategy. The Security Council should recall the thematic debate on peacebuilding last month under the Japanese presidency. In its statement (S/PRST/2010/7) the Council recognized the importance of inclusive dialogue, reconciliation and integration. Education plays an important role here because it can nurture mutual understanding, and a culture of peace can take root where differences can be settled through dialogue and the rule of law without resorting to violence.

Japan is a strong advocate of human security, with its conviction that every individual — irrespective of religion, race, sex or place of residence — is entitled to enjoy a peaceful, healthy life with dignity, free from fear and free from want. Intercultural dialogue presupposes the importance of promoting the human security of people concerned. Japan has been bold in increasing opportunities for intercultural dialogue, including organizing dialogue among civilizations between Japan and the Islamic world, exchange programmes for youth, women and young diplomats from various cultural backgrounds, and an Islamic, Israeli and Palestinian youth exchange programme to advance the Middle East peace process. We also appreciate the strong initiative of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia on dialogue among religions and civilizations.

Intercultural dialogue is the most effective instrument for maintaining peace and security. Japan is committed to enhancing human security through active intercultural dialogue.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Mr. President, we are honoured by your presence today in the Security Council. I thank Lebanon for holding this very important debate today. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his participation.

This is a timely moment to hold a debate on intercultural dialogue for peace and security, coming as it does on the eve of the Third Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, which is going to begin tomorrow in Rio de Janeiro, as has already been mentioned. The Forum will seek to rethink the way tensions among different cultures are dealt with and to launch projects for the promotion of trust and understanding among nations. It will address questions that include the challenges of stimulating integration in multicultural societies and of strengthening the role of women and of religious leaders in the advancement of peace.

It is very fitting that today's debate is promoted by a country such as Lebanon, which knows and appreciates the benefits of the peaceful coexistence of cultures, faiths and traditions and recognizes the value of dialogue and understanding.

The theme of our debate is also very close to the heart of Brazilians. We are a country born of a mix of cultures and ethnicities. We were enriched by the significant contribution that many immigrant groups have made to our country and culture, among which is an important Lebanese community. For us, therefore, intercultural dialogue is not a political preference; it is part of our own identity. We are determined, in the Council and elsewhere, to do our part in promoting and facilitating such dialogue.

As noted in the background note that your delegation, Mr. President, has prepared for this debate (S/2010/248, annex), intercultural dialogue is in no way alien to the concerns of the Security Council. International peace and security cannot be sustained in the absence of adequate communication, mutual understanding and a minimum of trust.

As a universal organization, the United Nations is uniquely placed to facilitate dialogue among nations and cultures. Such dialogue is important to diffuse tensions and to avoid a conflict. It should take place during a conflict, in the form of peacemaking. It must happen afterwards, though peacekeeping, peacebuilding and mechanisms of reconciliation and transitional justice.

Discussions on preventive diplomacy in the United Nations tend to consider issues such as early warning systems, mediation and good offices. They are all necessary and potentially effective. However, in cases where conflict arises or may arise due to

profound differences — actual or perceived — in values, traditions and faiths, there is a deeper perspective of preventive diplomacy that can be explored, one that, instead of managing conflict, seeks to eliminate or mitigate the possibility of conflict by changing the way people and groups see and react to differences.

Such a deeper approach seeks to promote a structured exchange at several levels among persons, groups, governments and cultural and religious organizations. The goal is to correct misconceptions, prove prejudices wrong and mitigate stereotyping and simplistic generalizations.

One element of such an approach must be what some have called education for tolerance — a conscious and sustained effort to form the minds of individuals and to influence the ethos of groups and institutions so that they accept and even welcome the difference. If we succeed in building institutions and educating people in that manner, some of the intangible but very powerful root causes of conflict in many parts of the world will have been eliminated or abated.

The United Nations itself can also contribute to the intercultural dialogue through peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The work with local communities, capacity-building, support to local media, especially radio, and projects that promote dialogue and understanding are all means that can be used to that purpose. They contribute to a culture of peace. They help cement and exemplify the notion that a strong society requires not only the absence of violence, but a foundation of mutual trust and cooperation among diverse traditions and beliefs.

My delegation remains ready to support all efforts at the United Nations aimed at dispelling cultural misconceptions that nurture resentment and contribute to conflict. This Organization, built on the notion of collaboration for the benefit of all, including with regard to peace and security, has an indispensable role to play.

Ms. Anderson (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and thank the Secretary-General for the important remarks he made today.

Mr. President, let me begin by thanking you for your recent visit to Washington, D.C. Your visit highlighted the enduring strength of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Lebanon, as well as the many common goals we share, including reaching a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. The United States continues to strongly support Lebanon's independence and sovereignty and the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

We are pleased to note that there have been two rounds of proximity talks between Israelis and Palestinians already. We believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can agree to an outcome that ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable State based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and Israel's goal of a Jewish State with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israel's security requirements.

The United States recognizes that Jerusalem is a deeply, profoundly important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, for Jews, Muslims and Christians. We believe that through good-faith negotiations, the parties can agree on an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem and that safeguards its status for people around the world.

We call again on our international partners, both inside and outside this Council, to promote an atmosphere of cooperation between the parties. We renew our call for Arab States to advance the promise of the Arab Peace Initiative and take steps that show Israelis, Palestinians and their own citizens that peace is possible and will bring tangible benefits.

Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening the Council today to discuss the importance of promoting dialogue across cultures. As the world is woven closer together by technology and trade, new ways of thinking are replacing old lines of division. The United States supports frank and open dialogue in the spirit of mutual interest and mutual respect, rooted in the belief that cultures and faiths of the world need not be in conflict. Indeed, despite the great diversity of the human family, cultures the world over share common principles of justice, progress, tolerance and belief in the dignity of all human beings.

Exchanges such as this one help leaders share perspectives and views directly. But we should not neglect the importance of direct person-to-person dialogue and cooperation. Cross-cultural exchange is a task for citizens, not just officials. International

exchange and training programmes have long been important components of United States foreign policy and outreach, but their role is now being expanded. These programmes serve as concrete vehicles for cooperation that can have a lasting impact. The United States currently funds exchanges for more than 2.4 million people a year. And, while each programme is unique, they all advance our goal of promoting understanding among peoples. Millions of Americans, through schools and universities, religious institutions, youth groups and other organizations, help build close ties with peoples all around the world through their own informal exchanges.

Diversity and intercultural dialogue are very much a part of America's history and identity. What President Obama calls "our patchwork heritage" is an abiding source of national strength. The United States has, in many ways, been a long experiment in bridging cultural divides. The United States is a diverse and pluralistic society, one that people of all religious and cultural backgrounds call home. It is very much the American way to celebrate the different ways in which we have been created.

The United States recently decided to join the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations. Over the past five years, the Alliance has grown into an important global network of partners that fosters dialogue and encourages grass-roots projects in the areas of youth, education, media and the successful integration of migrants. We support the Alliance's mission, and we believe that by joining we can further the innovative, inclusive approach of that promising cultural initiative.

With his historic address in Cairo last year, President Obama called for a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world. As he said,

> "in order to move forward, we must say openly the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another and to seek common ground".

Not all differences can be easily bridged. Not all disputes will vanish simply from dialogue. But the United States firmly believes that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that would drive us apart. Frank, respectful and open dialogue strengthens those who would resolve disputes through negotiation and non-violence and weakens those who would replace argument and civility with rage, terrorism, violence, aggression and hatred.

Those who seek a partner for respectful dialogue and those who work for just and lasting peace will always have a friend in the United States.

Of course, recognizing our common humanity is only the beginning of our task. Our words must be matched with action, because, more and more, the challenges of our interwoven age are common to all of us, from climate change to nuclear proliferation to pandemic disease. We need global solutions to global challenges, and we need the respectful dialogue that helps us find peaceful solutions to even the most intractable problems.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to commend Your Excellency for convening this briefing in order to discuss the very important topic of intercultural dialogue for peace and security.

In an increasingly globalized world, different nations and civilizations live together and interact with each other. Therefore, intercultural dialogue is a permanent process with worldwide participation at all levels and should be placed at the top of the political agenda. At the same time, cultural diversity has become one of the major political challenges to modern democracies, citizenship, pluralism, social cohesion and, above all, peace and stability among nations. Hence, Bosnia and Herzegovina is of the view that intercultural dialogue is one of the key issues of our time.

History has shaped Europe as a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious continent. At the same time, new realities such as migration and globalization are expected to enrich its physiognomy, making it more open, deeply democratic and more multicultural. This pertains also to my country. The Balkans, as an area characterized by countries that share many historic events, with a richness of cultural and religious diversity, are facing challenges and difficulties that require a comprehensive response.

Alienation, misconceptions, exclusion, marginalization and lack of knowledge about the culture, traditions, beliefs and history of others represent a serious threat and challenge to peaceful and

good relations among peoples and nations. Stereotypes regarding religions and civilizations may have serious political implications and create an atmosphere of tension which can erupt into acts of violence, as we have witnessed in many situations.

We are of the belief that intercultural and interreligious dialogue can play an increasingly important role in post-conflict societies, advancing regional cooperation and solving some difficulties. It can also be a useful tool of preventive diplomacy aiming to defuse tensions, support mediation and promote and encourage understanding.

Yet multiculturalism should not be defined simply as a multitude of cultures with equal status, but as a system based on common values and the development of peace. Interculturality refers to a constant interaction between cultures in the spirit of building bridges among peoples. In that regard, reinforcing intercultural dialogue, underlining shared values and promoting the settlement of disputes by peaceful means should be given the utmost priority. Furthermore, the promotion of dialogue among various cultures, on the basis of tolerance and respect for diversity, can result in the reduction of tensions and contribute to international peace and security.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that international initiatives in the field of international and intercultural dialogue, encompassing those carried out by the United Nations, including the Alliance of Civilizations, have beneficial effects and should be widely promoted. In December 2009, Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted a conference under the banner of the Alliance of Civilizations. On that occasion, a Declaration was adopted endorsing the principles, objectives and recommendations of the Regional Strategy on Intercultural Dialogue, which aims to contribute to the further building of bridges and strengthening of trust through enhanced intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the region. The Declaration considers education, youth and media as key instruments to build pluralistic, inclusive and cohesive societies, and the Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe was the first ever adopted in the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Intercultural dialogue as a tool of peacebuilding is an indispensable instrument for fostering tolerance and consolidating the values of justice, equality and respect. It should be an integral part of nationally owned peacebuilding strategies aiming at promoting the culture of peace and turning pluralism into a source of strength, with equality in diversity.

In a globalized world, where migration is an inevitable phenomenon, the need for interaction among individuals and groups and for understanding of different cultures, traditions and beliefs will be even greater. In that context, efforts should be made to reduce the room for ignorance and stereotyping of those who are different. We believe that tolerance is essential for ensuring social cohesion. At the same time, social cohesion is an important element for peace and security, not only within a country but also between countries.

In that respect, we are of the view that the Security Council, with its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security, can and should do more in terms of preventive diplomacy and promotion of intercultural dialogue as a mechanism for maintaining peace and security. Efforts should be made through a dialogue-based approach to problems, including activities such as fact-finding missions, early warning about potential conflicts and, in particular, mediation and confidence-building measures.

We welcome the appointment of special representatives and the use of good offices as alternatives that can yield useful recommendations for the peaceful settlement of disputes prior to preventive deployment or enforcement measures.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina is convinced that today's briefing will strengthen our commitment to dialogue as a tool that can contribute to achieving peace and security in the world.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Prime Minister, your presence at this meeting, which your country had the welcome initiative to convene and for which we express our gratitude, demonstrates once again Lebanon's commitment to the fundamental values of dialogue, tolerance and peace. Intercultural dialogue is fundamental to the maintenance of international peace and security. Its daily practice promotes the development and expansion of relations among peoples and leads them to a better understanding of and acquaintance with one another through what is deepest, truest and most sacred for them.

Promoting cultural diversity and its corollary, dialogue, is the leitmotiv of the international community as we celebrate 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. The Security Council cannot stand of the sidelines of this major wave that is calling on the peoples and civilizations of the whole world to come together though intercultural dialogue.

My delegation attaches great importance to our meeting today as a means of establishing synergy between intercultural dialogue and the maintenance of international peace and security. In an international environment buffered by numerous currents, especially those generated by new information and communications technology, the world is increasingly becoming a global village, and the need to bring peoples and cultures together is emerging as an powerful necessity for building peace in the minds of humankind. This need has been heightened by new challenges and threats to international peace and security such as international terrorism and religious extremism. In this context, seeking through dialogue means for compromise among religions, ethnic groups and civilizations is an indispensable tool for promoting peace between nations.

The crises and armed conflicts that characterize much of the current international security environment are fuelled by our passions, our blind selfishness and our refusal to listen to others in a spirit of humanism and humility. It is by setting aside our cultural and individual differences that we will gradually come to understand that what unites us as human beings is far more important than what divides us.

From this standpoint, there is a need for the Security Council, through its many peacekeeping missions, to give priority to dialogue and the reconciliation of peoples and ethnic groups emerging from conflict. When they are effective, these two tools contribute significantly to the restoration of social cohesion and lasting peace. The examples of Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone illustrate this.

Here, the media also have an important role to play in promoting intercultural dialogue and bringing together peoples, communities and races. If there is one thing we must strive to banish from our hearts and minds, it is prejudice and misunderstanding among peoples of different cultures and religions, which are often the causes of crises and conflicts. The principles and ideals of the United Nations are founded on the paradigm of a pluralistic world where intercultural dialogue drives our common humanity.

We can spare present and future generations from the sorrows of war, religious intolerance, terrorism and nuclear threats only if we are able to integrate into our thoughts and actions the cross-cutting values that, instead of pitting our differences against one other, incorporate them lastingly into the body of humanity.

It is through intercultural dialogue that we will grasp the very essence of true peace: a peace which unites and does not divide us, which champions and does not stifle the other, and which, finally, celebrates and does not destroy the diversity and multiplicity of our shared heritage.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): At the outset, Mr. Prime Minister, I should like to extend a warm welcome to you and to thank the Lebanese presidency for having organized this meeting to discuss the importance of intercultural dialogue as a means of safeguarding international peace and security.

Lebanon is a living example of successful intercultural dialogue in itself. That, coupled with your personal commitment to promoting better understanding among different cultures, makes this meeting all the more meaningful and relevant as it is taking place under the Lebanese presidency, and in particular with you yourself in the Chair. We fully support your efforts to consolidate the foundations of peace and stability in Lebanon. Lebanon's success in openness and cultural diversity represents a beacon of hope for the entire region.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for having made room in his busy schedule to brief us today. I also thank him for his kind words in response to my country's co-sponsorship of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Likewise, I wish to welcome the participation in our meeting today of Mr. Alistair Burt of the United Kingdom.

The reason behind the creation of this universal body 65 years ago was "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Today we are equally committed to the same ideals and endeavour to achieve this goal in a security environment that is even more challenging. Indeed, since the establishment of the

United Nations, the international security environment has been transformed dramatically. Today we live in a globalized world where more and more people from different cultures interact constantly, shrinking the world in unprecedented ways. As such, and as never before, we witness global challenges having local impacts, while local events have the power to impact the whole world.

We also live in an increasingly complex world where, in addition to conventional risks, new and evolving threats emerge, posing enormous challenges to international peace and security. Indeed, asymmetrical risks such as terrorism, extremism, xenophobia and religious and cultural stereotyping present growing sources of concern for our collective security. Given that many of these risks recognize no national boundaries, securing and maintaining peace today remains an even more difficult task for the international community.

Another obvious reality we can speak about in today's world, so full of uncertainties, is that it is beyond the capacity of any single country to tackle these new challenges alone. That is why the international community is compelled to adopt cooperative approaches and strengthen effective multilateralism. All of this in turn necessitates better understanding among nations, enabling them to rise above classic stereotypes, reject us-and-them mentalities and engage in genuine dialogue aimed at attaining our common objectives.

We believe that the United Nations, as the sole international forum with universal membership, must take the lead towards that end and exert every effort to promote intercultural dialogue. And, given the negative security implications of any failure to do that, the Security Council should also assume its fair share of responsibility while dealing with conflict situations.

That is true also because we know today that our security cannot be ensured by military means alone. Intercultural misconceptions are sometimes at the core of the conflicts with which we have to grapple in the Council. Hence, we need comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of these misconceptions, be they historical, cultural, social or economic. Issues related to intercultural dialogue should therefore have their rightful place in our policy formulations. As you mentioned in your introductory remarks, Mr. President, peace in the Middle East is certainly one of those areas that would benefit from such a dialogue. Overall, respect for different cultures and dialogue help moderation and reconciliation in conflict situations.

To this end, we should first and foremost acknowledge cultural diversity as an integral part of the common heritage of humanity and as an asset for the advancement of humankind. To achieve respect and understanding among cultures, we should accept differences, fight ignorance and prejudice, identify commonalities, amplify voices of moderation in our societies, and encourage dialogue at every level. Only then will our quest for social peace and harmony be attained.

Due to its history and geography, Turkey has a special understanding of the need to promote intercultural dialogue. Indeed, over centuries Turkey has historically, geographically and socially straddled and bridged many different cultures and tried to create an environment of mutual understanding among them conducive to peace, stability and prosperity. Our thinking has been firmly based on dialogue and cooperation, and we have always been a strong advocate of cultural tolerance, diversity and moderation. That is also why Turkey feels a special responsibility to actively contribute to the promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding in its region and beyond. For we know by experience that intercultural dialogue plays a constructive role in the fields of conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding.

This is also precisely the reason why, together with Spain, we have co-sponsored the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. Indeed, the Alliance of Civilizations, which was launched by the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain in 2005 under the auspices of the Secretary-General, is founded on the very principle that different cultures and civilizations can live together in peace provided that they have a better understanding of the values and principles that unite them.

Since its inception, the Alliance of Civilizations has provided a sound platform to this end, and today it has become a truly global peace initiative aimed at breaking down walls of misperception, connecting people and building bridges towards peaceful cohabitation. Today, the Alliance serves as a global facilitator to promote sustainable dialogue among various stakeholders, including young people, women,

parliamentarians, the media, civil society and the private sector.

We are pleased to see a growing number of Member States embrace and act upon the ideals of the Alliance. In this framework, we welcome the United States as the latest member of our Group of Friends, bringing the total number to 120. Such wide recognition and support makes us all the more hopeful for the future, as only the commitment of Member States to the ideals of cultural diversity can carry the Alliance of Civilizations agenda forward.

As noted by the Secretary-General, our meeting today has proved to be very timely for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative as well, since the third Forum of the Alliance will take place in a few days, on 28 and 29 May in Rio de Janeiro. We are confident that today's meeting and the Rio Forum will provide further impetus for an inclusive and open platform for intercultural dialogue.

Our history reminds us that cultural ignorance has been one of the obstacles to peace and development. Today, the risks are even greater in that regard. Therefore, so long as we empower prejudice and ignorance rather than peaceful coexistence and respect, conflict and poverty will continue to prevail to the detriment of all humankind.

Let us not forget that human development, security and peace are ultimately indivisible and that they are vital for our progress. Intercultural dialogue in this regard will make our efforts easier and stronger while we tackle these challenges in a collective manner. In other words, effective multilateralism will only benefit from a better understanding among different cultures, as it will break down the barriers to multilateral cooperation in many areas of common interest. In this context, it is my very sincere belief that our continued efforts in this direction will produce a more tolerant and peaceful world for future generations.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We highly appreciate your presence in the Security Council today, Sir, and thank the Government of Lebanon for its initiative of organizing this important meeting of the Council, at which we have the opportunity to reflect on a topic that is and should be of particular importance to the Organization. The great majority of Member States have a multi-ethnic makeup that promotes diversity and plurality in contemporary society.

All cultures and civilizations without exception make their own contribution to enriching humankind in the sense that respect for and acceptance of religious, ethnic and cultural diversity are essential values that strengthen the purposes and principles set out in the United Nations Charter. My delegation welcomes today's discussion because we are convinced that the active promotion of the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, in which cultural diversity is respected and encouraged, should prove to be a fundamental value governing relations between States.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, armed conflict, terrorism and the most serious violations of human rights — including genocide and crimes against humanity — have exacerbated suspicion and fear among various societies. Misperceptions, ignorance and prejudice often lead to acts of violence that threaten international coexistence. That is why it is essential that we counter stereotypes and false assessments that help to create patterns of hostility and undermine trust among societies and individuals.

However, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in all their manifestations are too deeply rooted in contemporary reality, despite binding legal agreements and the good diplomatic intentions that have emerged in recent years. Intercultural dialogue undoubtedly has a special role to play in promoting mutual understanding and improving relations among nations. The Security Council must, among its responsibilities, join in efforts to promote greater rapprochement among cultures in order to overcome prejudice and strengthen reconciliation initiatives based on respect, tolerance, diversity, fairness and justice. To that end, the Council must be mindful of all extremist movements that threaten international peace and security.

We also feel that, when we speak of intercultural dialogue for peace and security, we should also incorporate notions of vital importance to the prevention and resolution of conflicts, such as the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights, and respect for international humanitarian law. The integration of those elements into the decisions adopted by the Security Council undoubtedly contributes to a culture of peace and to respect for traditions and beliefs.

Mexico feels that we should promote the added value of multicultural societies. While in theory the benefits of diversity are recognized, in practice some

sectors fear that it could weaken the State, cause conflicts and hold back development. We must demolish this myth in order to promote tolerance in favour of international peace and security.

As a nation with a deep-rooted multiethnic and pluricultural character resulting from its history, Mexico has a very rich and varied culture which is fed daily by the combination of all groups and individuals of the most diverse backgrounds, including the Lebanese immigration and groups and individuals who make up the Mexican nation. That is why we attach particular importance to the dialogue between cultures. This dialogue transcends borders whenever it deals with the ongoing communications and interrelations that flow between those groups and societies associated with the natural movements of persons who, for various reasons, emigrate to other parts of the world but also maintain close links with their countries of origin.

The free flow of persons should be accompanied by cultural understanding, tolerance and constructive dialogue in favour of open societies that respect plurality and difference.

Mexico is part of the Group of Friends of the initiative known as the Alliance of Civilizations, which seeks to prioritize dialogue and the search for mutual understanding among various cultures, both within our own societies as well as in relations among the peoples. Among its guiding principles the Alliance stresses appreciation for the diversity of civilizations and cultures, not only as a basic characteristic of human society, but as an engine of its progress. Thus its mechanisms are directed at promoting harmony and easing conflicts between different societies.

My country hopes that the Middle East will become an example of this in upcoming years, enjoying peace and security for all States, including Israel and Palestine.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I wish to welcome you, Your Excellency, Prime Minister Hariri, and to thank you for organizing and presiding over this important debate on intercultural dialogue for peace and security. We thank the Secretary-General for his statement. We also welcome the participation of The Honourable Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the Government of the United Kingdom.

This debate provides an opportunity to focus on an important issue, particularly in view of General Assembly resolution 62/90, which declared 2010 the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. We are convinced that promotion of intercultural dialogue is one of the ways to foster peace and security.

Some of the current conflicts in some parts of the world could be attributed to a misperception and misinterpretation of diverse cultures and beliefs. Such misperception can also adversely affect or even fuel hatred, stereotypes and discrimination. In this context, therefore, dialogue and a deeper understanding between cultures play a significant role in addressing misconceptions and also help in fostering mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

We commend the work of the Alliance of Civilizations, which has made important progress in bringing cultures closer together and strengthening intercultural understanding. Promoting intercultural dialogue is also essential in building a multilateral system based on mutual respect and in reinforcing common interests. Discussions such as this on intercultural dialogue create awareness and promote international solidarity, tolerance, stability and peace.

In this increasingly globalizing world, respect for cultural and religious diversity not only enriches national identity but also promotes dialogue among civilizations. That helps in creating an environment conducive to exchange of information, building mutual trust and understanding. Intercultural dialogue, cooperation and harmonious coexistence contribute significantly to the maintenance of international peace and security. They also help in clarifying the values of various cultures and faiths, thereby avoiding generalizations and misconceptions.

We are convinced that as the international community seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts and to deal with new threats, intercultural dialogue can play a useful role in tackling those issues. We therefore salute UNESCO's continued commitment to promoting intercultural understanding, as well as the outcome of the 2008 World Conference on Dialogue, held in Madrid, and the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, held in Istanbul in 2009.

It is critical to expand and strengthen cross-cultural contacts among various groups, including youth, civil society, the media and academia. It is

important to continue promoting intercultural dialogue for peace, for security and for development.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all I would like to express my gratitude to you, Sir, Prime Minister Hariri, for presiding over this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

While the pursuit of peace, development and cooperation has become a major trend of our times, the world has also witnessed the emergence of new challenges to international peace and security. The interlinking of traditional and non-traditional security threats, the incessant outbreak of regional conflicts and hot-spot issues, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are threats that we cannot afford to ignore. Discrimination and prejudice against religions and cultures have given rise to violent conflicts and strife and have caused unprecedented clashes and friction among civilizations. The international community bears the common responsibility of strengthening cooperation to respond to those challenges, and it faces the arduous task of bridging differences and seeking common understanding.

China supports Lebanon's initiative to hold this thematic debate and believes that this meeting will help promote intercultural dialogue, enhance mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among countries and maintain international peace and security.

Strengthening interfaith and intercultural dialogue is in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and is conducive to preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlement of disputes and post-conflict peacebuilding. It will also help the United Nations better fulfil its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

Here I would like to emphasize the following points. First, different faiths and cultures should be treated equally on the basis of mutual respect. While faiths and cultures vary in terms of the era of their origins and development, there is no hierarchy among them in terms of merit. All are a crystallization of human wisdom and have contributed to the progress and development of human society and thus deserve equal respect. Different faiths and cultures should learn from each other and coexist peacefully.

Secondly, intercultural dialogue should be strengthened in an open and inclusive spirit. History has shown that dialogue with other civilizations leads to mutual enrichment and development. In a post-crisis situation, strengthening intercultural dialogue is highly practical. Dialogue and discussion represent the best way to resolve differences and prevent conflict. Countries should adhere to the concepts of openness, inclusiveness and cooperation, and strengthen dialogue to overcome barriers, dispel misunderstandings and resolve disputes in order to prevent or reduce outbreaks of conflict.

Thirdly, we must show respect for differences and settle conflicts by peaceful means. Conflicts often result from the alienation, prejudice, discrimination and even hatred that can arise from differences. Our world should be varied yet harmonious. We believe that we should recognize and accept the diversity of our world and the differences among civilizations. We are opposed to linking terrorism to any particular nation, ethnic group or religion. The international community should function on the basis of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. It should use peaceful means, such as mediation, negotiation and good offices, to resolve problems, settle disputes and promote the solution of regional hot-spot issues in order to build a harmonious family of States.

China supports and actively participates in the efforts of the international community to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation, and has been a constructive partner in multiple United Nations initiatives and mechanisms relating to dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace. China is willing to continue to work with the international community to strengthen intercultural dialogue and build bridges of communication and cooperation, with a view to creating synergies promoting the maintenance of international peace and security, the advancement of common human development, and the building of a harmonious world.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): Nigeria joins other delegations in thanking Prime Minister Hariri for taking the time to come to New York to preside over today's Security Council meeting. We also welcome the presence of Mr. Alistair Burt, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, and thank him for his very insightful contribution. We welcome the Secretary-General and

appreciate his thoughtful remarks. Both the theme and the presence of Prime Minister Hariri attest to Lebanon's commitment to the ideals and objectives of the United Nations.

After all the statements that have been made around this table this morning, we are left in no doubt that dialogue and understanding are important instruments for international peace and security, particularly in a pluralistic society like ours. The United Nations is a fitting mosaic of our diversity, yet its Members are united in the common purpose of practicing tolerance and living together in peace with one another.

Therein lies the significance of the theme chosen by Lebanon for this debate. One cannot place a limit on the power and value of dialogue in promoting mutual cooperation, understanding, tolerance, respect for the views and interests of others, and, ultimately, unity in diversity. The idea of a culture of peace, dialogue of civilizations, interfaith dialogue and other similar concepts are not new to the United Nations. Indeed, they are the bedrock of international cooperation. It would seem, however, that there is a gap that Lebanon's initiative today will, we hope, help to fill. What is required is the political will and determination to promote these concepts as genuine tools for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. There is no doubt that the search for international peace and security would benefit from new approaches and new perspectives.

Living as we do in a world that is integrated and interdependent, we should cultivate and embrace a culture of dialogue and understanding, rather than guns and soldiers, to settle our differences. Nigeria knows at first-hand the great challenges and benefits of a pluralistic society. The bringing together of peoples of diverse languages, traditions, cultures and religions has culminated in an expansive country that has witnessed enormously trying times and moments, but whose innate capacity to remain united has become almost unbreakable.

Nigeria is determined to preserve its unity and diversity, not only for itself but also to help its neighbours. We draw from our diversity the strength to promote peace and contribute to efforts to maintain peace and security elsewhere. Indeed, our national ideals are encapsulated in our motto of "Unity and faith, peace and progress". Inter-community and interfaith dialogues are some of the key instruments promoted and encouraged by my Government, with the full participation of civil society, united in the objective of promoting harmony and peaceful coexistence.

While considerable progress is being made within countries to promote dialogue and understanding for peace and stability, we believe that a great deal needs to be done at the international level. We risk missing out on the benefits of the global village in which all are able to realize their different aspirations and potential in peace and harmony. For this reason, we must all commit to promoting dialogue as a real tool of preventive diplomacy.

Nearly four decades ago, the late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia warned that a philosophy that holds one race to be superior and another inferior could lead to war. This admonishment has played out in different theatres around the world, fuelled by differences in religion, ethnicity, language and culture, with dire consequences. The time has come for us to heed the words of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Respect for diversity is necessary for durable peace and security.

Let me thank you once again, Mr. President, for choosing the theme of intercultural dialogue for peace and security as a complement to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): I would to join other speakers in welcoming you, Sir, to the Security Council today. We thank you for presiding over this important debate and for your important remarks. We also appreciate your commitment and that of your country to the cause of intercultural dialogue for peace and security. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his participation and his statement.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the need for nations to promote peace and prosperity through dialogue, understanding and tolerance has become ever more important. In order to help prevent conflict, we must do everything we can to improve understanding among different cultures and religions, both at the global level and within our respective countries and regions. Dialogue aimed at enhancing mutual understanding must involve respect for different values and beliefs. At the same time, dialogue must be based on the full respect for all universally accepted human

rights and fundamental freedoms and on the principle of the rule of law.

Important work has been done by various United Nations bodies to underline the importance of and enhance intercultural dialogue. We also wish to acknowledge the initiatives taken by the Secretary-General and by individual Member States. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, initiated by Turkey and Spain, has become a significant global forum for intercultural exchange and the enhancement of mutual understanding. Austria has been an active member of the Alliance from its very inception in 2005 and will be represented by Foreign Minister Spindelegger in the upcoming third annual Forum in Rio de Janeiro. We look forward to hosting the fifth annual Forum, scheduled for 2012 in Vienna.

Austria has a long tradition of dialogue initiatives between cultures and religions. Our activities focus on areas where we believe that we can find common ground, such as the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also attach great importance to the promotion of social, cultural and religious pluralism and successful management of diversity. Fostering equal rights and opportunities for women and promoting their role and leadership in interreligious and intercultural dialogue are among the priority objectives of Austria's engagement in this field. In this context, in 2008 Austria and Lebanon successfully initiated a joint project entitled "The Role of Women in Dialogue: Empowerment and Consolidation".

Dialogue with Muslim communities and Islam has rightly attracted attention in recent years, in particular in Europe. I have to say that my country has specific experience in this area. In 2012, Austria will celebrate the centennial of legal recognition of Islam in our country, the first decision of this kind to be taken historically in Western Europe and a step that is of course linked to the historical experience we share with our neighbours at the Council table, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Just a few days ago, the Third Conference for European Imams and Religious Advisers took place in Vienna, with the support of the Austrian Government. Later this year, we will host the first Arab-European Young Leaders Forum, which aims at encouraging emerging leaders from Europe, including Turkey, and the Arab world to develop partnerships for better understanding and enhanced cooperation.

Together with Indonesia and Singapore, we have started a series of bilateral dialogue programmes. Based on the first diplomatic staff exchange in the field of intercultural dialogue with Indonesia, Austria will continue such exchange activities with other countries in cooperation with the League of Arab States. We would be happy to see other countries join this initiative.

In your remarks, Sir, you touched upon the conflict in the Middle East, which is clearly one of the areas where a meaningful dialogue between both sides is essential and indispensable in the search for common understanding. To that end, dialogue efforts should be concentrated on concrete goals and objectives in order to contribute to building trust and to generate real added value. We obviously also share the view that Jerusalem, with its unique heritage and tradition, can and should play a key role as a place of dialogue and encounter among cultures and civilizations.

We believe that the Security Council can make important contributions to promoting dialogue among cultures and civilizations with a view, in particular, to enhancing international peace and security in relation to relevant situations on its agenda. The Council could more actively encourage steps towards meaningful dialogue to help prevent and manage conflict and to build sustainable peace, both in international and intra-State conflicts, where appropriate.

Effective dialogue will normally result in compromise solutions that balance the interests of various actors. That being said, the Council needs to insist at the same time that the principles of the rule of law, the needs of transitional justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms be respected. Intercultural dialogue as a means of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding can be truly effective only if all sectors of the societies concerned are included.

The Council should therefore stress that women's contributions need to be integrated into dialogue efforts, pointing to the vital role women can play in re-establishing post-conflict societies, fostering tolerance and building sustainable peace.

When considering the promotion of intercultural dialogue as a means of conflict prevention and mediation, conflict resolution or peacebuilding, the Council could also intensify cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, which in many

instances have the advantage of being well acquainted with local and regional dynamics.

In conclusion, I wish to thank you once again, Sir, for this opportunity to reflect upon the issue of intercultural dialogue for conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding, as well for the important insights you have shared with us based on your country's unique experience in this field.

The President: I would like to thank all members for their participation here today, and add that we should not wait for disaster to happen before we react. We say this in the very same building where we wo to prevent disasters, conflicts and wars. I believe th intercultural dialogue is key to avoiding conflict especially if it is combined with the rule of law a very strong political will.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

There are no further speakers inscribed on m list. The Security Council has thus concluded th present stage of its consideration of the item on i agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.